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Information Bulletin

Grade 3 English Language Arts 1996-97

This document was written primarily for:

Students	✓
Teachers	✓
Administrators	✓
Parents	
General Audience	
Others	✓ Superintendents

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This bulletin contains general information about the Provincial Student Assessment Program and information specific to the Grade 3 English Language Arts Achievement Test. **It replaces all previous bulletins.**

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October 1996

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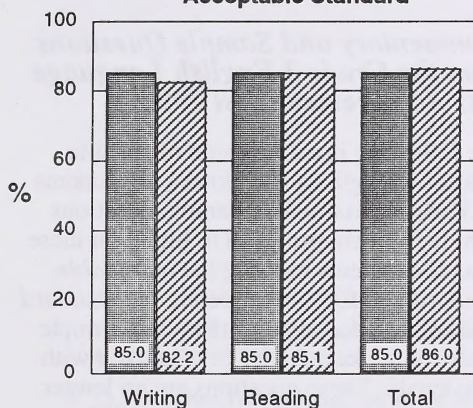
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Looking Back: Highlights of 1996

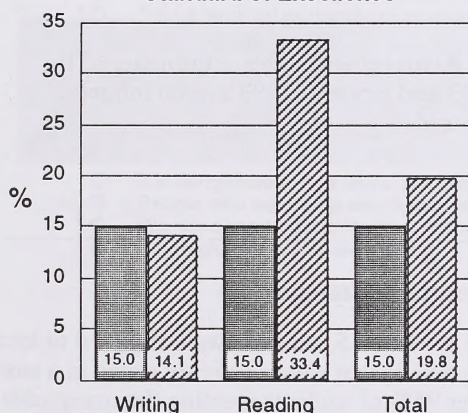
Grade 3 English Language Arts

This report provides teachers, school administrators, and the public with an overview of the results for the June 1996 Grade 3 Language Arts provincial assessment. It complements the detailed school and jurisdiction reports.

Acceptable Standard



Standard of Excellence



■ Achievement Standards*

▨ Actual Results**

*the percentage of students in the province expected to meet the acceptable standard and the standard of excellence

**the percentage of students in the province who met the standards (based on those who wrote)

Who Wrote the Test?

All students registered in Grade 3 were expected to write the 1996 English Language Arts Achievement Test. A total of 39 178 students wrote both parts of the test and were included in reported results. In 1996, only a small proportion of students in Grade 3 did not write the test: 1.1% of students were absent and 2.6% of students were excused from writing by their superintendent, and an additional 1.8% of students wrote only one part of the test.

What Was the Test Like?

The test had two parts.

Part A: Writing provided students with a picture and a brief explanation as a prompt for their writing. Students chose the format (narrative, letter, or diary/journal entries) that would allow them to do their best writing. This part of the test was scored in five categories: Content, Organization, Sentence Structure, Vocabulary, and Conventions. Content and Organization were weighted to be worth twice as much as each of the other categories.

Part B: Reading consisted of 40 multiple-choice questions based on reading selections from fiction, non-fiction, poetry, and visual media.

How Well Did Students Do?

Overall, students demonstrated the expected learnings, as assessed by the test. However, slightly fewer students (82.2%) than expected met the acceptable standard for writing.

In 14.2% of the schools, the percentage of students meeting the *acceptable standard* was significantly above expectations for the province. In 70.5% of the schools, the percentage of students meeting the *acceptable standard* was not significantly different from

provincial expectations. In 15.2% of schools, the percentage of students meeting the *acceptable standard* was significantly below provincial expectations. Schools where fewer than five students wrote the Grade 3 test are not included in these school calculations.

Detailed provincial test results are provided in school and jurisdiction reports.

Has Achievement Changed Since Last Year?

Results show an increase in achievement in both reading and writing. More students met the acceptable standard and the standard of excellence in 1996 than in 1995 on each component of the test and on the total test.

Reporting the Results

On August 23, 1996, each school jurisdiction received electronically a district report and individual school reports regarding their students' achievement, as well as guidelines for interpreting these results in relation to provincial standards.

To facilitate reflection on school programs, we expect that results will be shared with all school staff (not just teachers of grades 3, 6,

and 9), as well as with parents and the community.

Two copies of an individual profile for each student will be sent to the school that the student will attend in September. We expect that the Parent Copy be given to parents and the School Copy will remain with the student's record.

Commentary and Sample Questions from the Grade 3 English Language Arts Achievement Test 1996

The following is a discussion of specific areas of strength and weakness for students in Grade 3 classrooms. Sample questions from the test are provided to highlight these areas for students meeting the *acceptable standard* and for those meeting the *standard of excellence* for reading. For each sample question, the keyed answer is marked with an asterisk. These questions are no longer secured and will not be reused in 1997.

All Achievement Tests administered in 1993 and prior to 1993 are no longer secured.

5. The Knight hunted with

- ☐ people of the village
- ☐ his own family
- * ☐ lords and ladies
- ☐ a king and a queen

21. The poet wishes that

- ☐ bubble gum would last longer
- * ☐ there was a no-stick bubble gum
- ☐ gum was not so soft
- ☐ there was a gum that would stretch

Acceptable Standard

For **question 5**, students were required to locate key details that were explicitly stated in a story. Over 95% of students meeting the *acceptable standard* but not the *standard of excellence* were able to do this.

In **question 21**, students were required to determine the poet's attitude to the subject of a poem. Over 90% of students meeting the *acceptable standard* but not the *standard of excellence* were able to do this.

The strengths of students who met the *acceptable standard* include the ability to

- locate and attend to key details
- use key details to make generalizations about characters and situations
- relate what is known to new information
- draw conclusions using given information

The difficulties that students meeting the *acceptable standard* but not the *standard of excellence* experienced were in their ability to

- use contextual clues to describe character motivation
- make inferences
- identify main ideas
- determine an author's purpose
- recognize genre

Standard of Excellence

Question 7 required students to use story context cues to describe character motivation. Almost 90% of students meeting the *standard of excellence* were able to do this.

Question 8 required students to use prior experience in order to identify the message in a story. Over 90% of the students meeting the *standard of excellence* were able to do this.

Overall, students who met the *standard of excellence* had few difficulties with this assessment. These students show strengths in their ability to

- recognize character motivation
- compare information presented in two different texts
- use contextual clues to recognize meanings of words and phrases
- use prior knowledge and experience to enhance understanding

7. What words BEST show that the Knight had a sense of humour?

- ☐ "His head became as bald as a duck's egg"
- ☐ "The Knight was proud of his new wig"
- ☐ "How handsome they must think I am"
- * ☐ "so he laughed as merrily as anyone else"

8. What is the message of this story?

- ☐ It is dangerous to ride under low branches.
- ☐ People who wear wigs should not ride horses.
- * ☐ We need to be able to laugh at ourselves.
- ☐ Be careful when you are hunting.

Looking Ahead: What is Upcoming for 1997

General Information

The Provincial Student Assessment Program provides teachers, parents, students, school administrators, Alberta Education, and the public with information about what students know and can do in relation to provincial standards. Group results are reported at school, district, and provincial levels to improve learning opportunities for students.

The assessments are administered in two subject areas at Grade 3—language arts and mathematics—and in four subject areas at grades 6 and 9—language arts, mathematics, social studies, and science.

The assessments are based on provincial standards, which reflect important learnings in the subject areas listed above. Classroom teachers from across the province are extensively involved in developing and field testing the assessment instruments.

Administering the Assessment

Information about the nature of the provincial assessments as well as their administration to special needs students can be found in the *General Information Bulletin, Provincial Student Assessment Program*, which is mailed each fall to all superintendents and principals.

Schedule

The written-response component of English and French Language Arts will be administered during the last week of May. The machine-scorable component of all achievement tests will be administered during the last two weeks of June. Specific information regarding scheduling is provided in the current *General Information Bulletin, Provincial Student Assessment Program*.

To minimize any risks to security, we recommend that all students complete the

test on the same day. Superintendents approve a local schedule for achievement test administration within the dates provided. Students who are absent when the tests are administered and who return to school by the end of the school year must write the tests upon their return. By scheduling the tests early in the administration period most, if not all, absentees can be tested upon their return to school. The principal is responsible for ensuring the security of the tests.

The tests that will be administered each year are:

Grade 3

English Language Arts (*Part A: Writing and Part B: Reading*)

Mathematics (English and French forms)

Grade 6

English Language Arts (*Part A: Writing and Part B: Reading*)

Français 6^e année (*Partie A: Production écrite and Partie B: Lecture*)

Mathematics (English and French forms)

Science (English and French forms)

Social Studies (English and French forms)

Grade 9

English Language Arts (*Part A: Writing and Part B: Reading*)

Français 9^e année (*Partie A: Production écrite and Partie B: Lecture*)

Mathematics (English and French forms)

Science (English and French forms)

Social Studies (English and French forms)

Students in French Programs

All students in French programs must write English Language Arts, French Language Arts, and French versions of other achievement tests if their language of instruction is French. Alberta Education will send a checklist to schools in January requesting an indication of how many English or French tests are required. These

forms must be returned through jurisdiction offices by mid-February.

Marking Achievement Tests Locally

Teachers are able to mark the tests before returning them to Alberta Education. Teachers can use the results as part of an individual student's year end assessment, as well as for planning instruction.

* Resources for the implementation of the revised Program of Studies for elementary science will not be available until the 1997–98 school year. Therefore, implementation of the revised Program of Studies for students in French programs is optional for the 1996–97 school year. Schools offering grade 6 science in French must decide which form of the science test they will write in June 1997. The choices are either the translated form of the 1996 Grade 6 Science Achievement Test based on the previous program or the 1997 Grade 6 Science Achievement Test based on the revised program. Schools offering Grade 6 Science in French must choose one form or the other for all students in Grade 6 writing in French.

Performance Assessments

Performance assessments provide students with real-life tasks. These assessments address many of the learner expectations that cannot be easily measured using only paper and pencil strategies. These tasks have been developed by classroom teachers and are designed to model good classroom instruction and assessment practices.

The Student Evaluation Branch uses these tasks to collect a broader base of information about what students know and can do than achievement tests alone can provide. These assessments will be administered to a provincial sample of students in all subjects on a rotating basis. The following assessments will be given in 1997:

Grade 3

- informational book tasks in language arts

Grade 6

- social studies: inquiry into basic needs

Grade 9

- problem-solving and communication activities in science

Standards: Curriculum, Assessment, Achievement

The move toward results-based curricula has re-emphasized the need for a clear delineation of standards and their purpose. All standards and all methods of setting standards require judgement.

The process of setting a standard can only be as good as the judgements that go into it. The standard will depend on whose judgements are involved in the process. In this sense, all standards are subjective. Yet once a standard has been set, the decisions based on it can be made objectively. Instead of a separate set of judgements for each test-taker, you will have the same set of judgements applied to all test-takers. Standards cannot be objectively determined, but they can be objectively applied.¹

Definitions

The Achievement Testing Program is directly concerned with three different but related standards. These provincial standards are curriculum standards, assessment standards, and achievement standards. Local targets are also described in this section.

- **Curriculum Standards** are the expected student learnings sequenced into grade levels. They include broad statements of knowledge, skills, and attitude expectations against which student performance is judged. These standards are established in the process of curriculum development and

¹ Passing Scores; Samuel A. Livingston, Michael J. Zieky; Educational Testing Service, 1982.

are found in the *Program of Studies* document produced for each subject.

- **Assessment Standards** are the criteria adopted for judging actual student achievement relative to curriculum standards. They are ultimately expressed and applied to test scores. They are derived from answers to questions such as: What scores must a student obtain or how many questions on a given test must a student answer correctly in order for his/her performance on the test to be judged as acceptable or excellent?
- **Achievement Standards** are judgements that specify what percentages of students are expected to achieve an acceptable and an excellent level of performance in relation to each course of studies, i.e. to the relevant curriculum standards. It is important to point out that this judgement is not a prediction of the percentage of students who will actually achieve acceptable or excellent levels of performance, but rather a specification of the percentage of students at a given grade or year in school who are *expected* to achieve the acceptable (85%) or excellent standard (15%). **The 85% of students expected to meet the acceptable standard includes those students who meet the standard of excellence.** These standards apply to school, jurisdiction, and provincial performance.
- **Local targets** are goals set in schools/districts to focus plans for helping students learn what is expected by the provincial government. These local targets reflect the specific needs of students, the views of teachers, school administration, and the local community, and the resources available to provide learning opportunities for students.

Confirming Standards

Confirming standards is a process whereby judgements about students' performance on the assessment are made in relation to provincial standards. For more information on the confirming standards process, refer to

the *Provincial Student Assessment Program Provincial Report, June 1993*

Administration. For information on the selection of teachers for participation in the confirming standards process, refer to the current *General Information Bulletin, Provincial Student Assessment Program*.

Purpose of Assessment Standards

The provincial standards are the basis upon which we assess how well students are doing in reading and writing by the end of Grade 3. These standards reflect the essential learnings that all Alberta students are expected to achieve. Provincial standards are useful, therefore, for assessing Grade 3 students in all types of school programs—public, private, and home education. By comparing actual results with expected provincial standards, decisions can be made about whether achievement is, in fact, “good enough.”

Description of the Language Arts Assessment Standards

The following statements describe what is expected of Grade 3 students who are meeting the *acceptable standard* or the *standard of excellence* on independent work at the end of the Grade 3 Language Arts program. These statements represent the standards against which student achievement will be measured.

Acceptable Standard

Writing

Students who meet the *acceptable standard* for writing in Grade 3 Language Arts are expected to be able to retell a series of connected personal experiences as a narrative and to tell stories from their own perspective. They should be able to use narrative formats on their own. They are able to use a writing style that generally holds the reader's interest.

Students meeting the *acceptable standard* are expected to use relevant but general details and/or ideas in their writing. They are expected to focus the writing on the

important ideas related to a topic and to arrange those ideas in a discernible order. They are expected to provide a beginning and an ending that are connected to the ideas presented in the piece. They are also expected to be able to compose stories following a basic story structure.

The expectation is that students meeting the *acceptable standard* experiment with words and sentence structures to express their ideas and experiences. They are expected to use words and expressions that are clear, although general rather than specific.

Students who meet the *acceptable standard* for writing in Grade 3 Language Arts are expected to use complete sentences, with correct capitalization and end punctuation, most of the time. They are expected to be able to spell many familiar words correctly and unfamiliar words phonetically.

Reading

Students who meet the *acceptable standard* for reading in Grade 3 Language Arts are expected to read and understand a variety of types of fiction and non-fiction materials that are commonly found in Grade 3 classrooms. They are expected to be able to use the features of narrative/poetic and informational text to aid understanding. They should be able to use their own prior experiences and knowledge of language, as well as context clues, in order to make meaning from text. They are expected to be able to recognize explicit relationships between events and characters in a story. To meet the *acceptable standard*, students are expected to explore print and non-print sources to extend knowledge, retell key details or important ideas, and draw conclusions.

Standard of Excellence

Writing

Students who meet the *standard of excellence* for writing in Grade 3 Language Arts are expected to comfortably retell a series of connected experiences as a narrative and to tell stories from their own

perspective or from another perspective. The expectation is that they are able to experiment with a variety of narrative formats. They are expected to express a unique experience and their own personality through their choice of topic, characters, actions, and specific language, using a style that captivates and holds the reader's interest.

To meet the *standard of excellence*, students are expected to use specific details and/or ideas that are appropriate for achieving the purpose of the writing. They are expected to focus the writing on the important ideas related to a topic, and arrange them in a logical sequence without gaps in the presentation of information. They are expected to begin their writing in an interesting manner and to draw it to a conclusion that is related to the focus of the piece. They should be able to compose stories that incorporate setting, problem, and external responses of the main characters and resolution. They are also able to experiment with dialogue in their writing.

The expectation is that students meeting the *standard of excellence* experiment with words and sentence structures to express ideas and experiences. They are expected to show control and variation in their use of sentence structure and to choose specific words to create desired effects.

Students who meet the *standard of excellence* for writing in Grade 3 Language Arts are expected to correctly use capital letters, periods, and question and exclamation marks. They are expected to be able to produce correct spellings for frequently used words and apply their knowledge of common spelling patterns correctly when spelling unfamiliar words.

Reading

Students who meet the *standard of excellence* for reading in Grade 3 Language Arts are expected to read and clearly understand an increasing variety of genres, including those that are not the usual story form. They are expected to be able to use their understanding of the organizational

structure and presentation of narrative/poetic and informational text to assist them as readers. They should be able to draw on prior experiences, knowledge of language, and context clues in order to make meaning from text. They are expected to be able to understand explicit as well as implicit relationships between events and characters in a story. To meet the *standard of excellence*, students are expected to explore print and non-print sources to extend knowledge, and to synthesize information and draw conclusions or make judgements.

Grade 3 English Language Arts Assessment

The Grade 3 English Language Arts Assessment consists of two components

- **Part A: Writing** consists of one writing assignment to be given during a period totalling approximately 70 minutes, preferably the 20-minute period directly preceding recess (10 minutes for discussion, 10 minutes for planning) and the 50-minute period directly following recess (drafting and revising). Additional time of up to 30 minutes may be provided for students to complete Part A: Writing.
- **Part B: Reading** consists of 40 multiple-choice questions based on reading selections from fiction, non-fiction, and poetry. The test is divided into 2 sections. Section I has 20 questions and Section II has 20 questions. The test is designed to be completed in 60 minutes.

Additional time of up to 30 minutes may be provided for students to complete Part B: Reading.

A break should be provided between Section I and Section II.

The booklet for Part B: Reading contains both the reading selections and the

questions. Students record their answers in the test booklet.

Students may **NOT** use a dictionary when completing either Part A or Part B.

Part A: Writing

Important Information to Note!

Students may do their writing using a word processor. For information about using word-processing technology to complete the written component of the achievement test, see the General Information Bulletin, Provincial Student Assessment Program.

For **Part A: Writing**, students will be given an illustrated writing prompt and will be allowed to choose the format that best fits their approach to the prompt (narrative, letter, diary/journal entries). The person who administers the test will read the instructions and the story prompt aloud to the students.

Students will be given time to discuss the prompt with classmates in groups of two to four children, or to think alone about it, and to plan their response before beginning to write.

The booklet for **Part A: Writing** includes a page for ideas/planning, followed by lined pages for writing.

The writing blueprint is given on page 9 and a practice assignment for classroom use is presented on pages 11 and 12. It illustrates the kind of writing prompt that will appear on the assessment.

Scoring guides follow on pages 13 to 17. Teachers should discuss the sample assignment and scoring criteria with their students.

Blueprint for Part A: Writing

Reporting Category	Description of Writing Assignment	Standards
<p>*Content (selecting ideas and details to achieve a purpose)</p> <p>Events and/or actions should be plausible within the context established by the writer. The student should be able to select appropriate details to describe events and characters, and their actions.</p>	<p>The writing assignment follows a writing prompt that will be read aloud to students, and some pictures to help stimulate the imagination of the students. The assignment allows the student to select the format that would best fit his/her approach to the prompt.</p>	<p>The student's achievement in each reporting category will be described according to the following standard statements:</p>
<p>*Organization (organizing ideas and details into a coherent whole)</p> <p>The student should be able to organize ideas, events, and details in a coherent sequence.</p>		<p>Meets the standard of excellence</p>
<p>Sentence Structure (structuring sentences effectively)</p> <p>The student should be able to use a variety of sentence types and structures appropriately.</p>		<p>Approaches the standard of excellence</p>
<p>Vocabulary (selecting and using words and expressions correctly and effectively)</p> <p>The student should be able to use words and expressions appropriately and effectively.</p>		<p>Clearly meets the acceptable standard</p>
<p>Conventions (using the conventions of written language correctly and effectively)</p> <p>The student should be able to communicate clearly by adhering to appropriate spelling, punctuation, and capitalization.</p>		<p>Does not clearly meet the acceptable standard</p>
		<p>Clearly below the acceptable standard</p>
		<p>INS insufficient</p>

*These categories are weighted to be worth twice as much as each of the others.

Marking

Classroom teachers will be able to mark students' writing, using the scoring guides presented on pages 13 to 17, before returning materials to Alberta Education. Samples of students' writing that exemplify the scoring criteria will also be provided to support local marking.

Marks awarded locally can be submitted to Alberta Education and used as the first reading of a student's response. The papers will then be marked centrally by Alberta Education as the second reading. Both marks contribute to the student's final mark. In case of a discrepancy between the two marks, papers will be adjudicated by a third reading, which will determine the final mark that a paper is awarded. In this way, valid and reliable individual and group results can be reported.

Papers that are not marked locally by teachers will be marked centrally only once. A small percentage of these papers will be marked a second time for inter-rater reliability.

All papers will be marked centrally in Edmonton in July. The Student Evaluation Branch will contact superintendents in the spring for their recommendations of markers. The approximately 160 Grade 3 teachers selected will reflect proportional representation from the various regions of Alberta. To qualify for recommendation by a superintendent, a prospective marker must be currently teaching Grade 3 Language Arts, have taught it for at least two years, have a permanent Alberta teaching certificate, and be employed by a school jurisdiction at the time of marking. Markers will be contacted in May. The list of markers will be finalized no later than June 15. Group leaders will meet before the marking session.

Practice Writing Assignment

The practice assignment and instructions that follow are similar in format and content to those that will be presented on the Grade 3 Language Arts Achievement Test.

Grade 3 Achievement Test
English Language Arts
Part A: Writing

Description

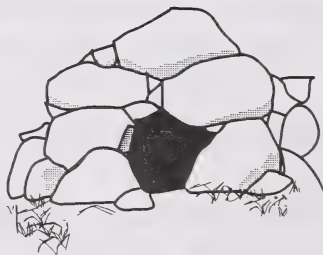
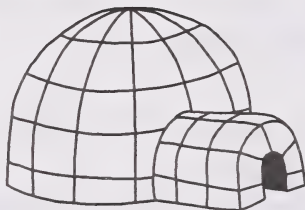
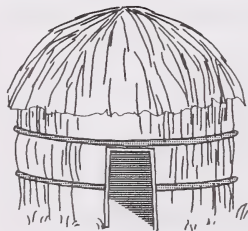
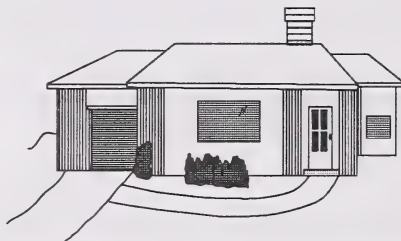
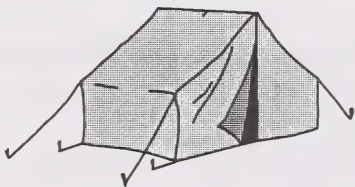
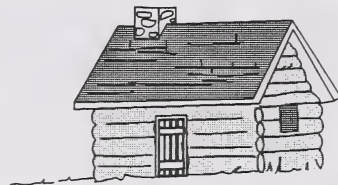
In this test, you will have 10 minutes for discussion, 10 minutes for planning, and 50 minutes to complete your writing.

Instructions

- Read the story starter as your teacher reads it aloud.
- Talk with your classmates about the writing activity or think about it by yourself.
- Plan your writing in whatever way you choose (web, list, pictures, etc.).
- Choose the kind of writing (story, letter, diary/journal entries) that will allow you to show your **best** writing.
- When you are doing your writing, print or write as neatly as you can.
- When you have finished, **check your work carefully** and correct any mistakes.

*Pretend you visit a friend who lives in one of these interesting homes. **Exciting** and **amazing** things happen! You'll remember this visit forever!*

Write about an adventure you have.



CONTENT

Focus

When marking **CONTENT** appropriate for Grade 3 writing, the marker should consider the

- relationship between events, actions, and the context (situation) established by the writer
- specificity of detail
- reader/writer relationship

Meets the Standard of Excellence 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Events, actions, and/or ideas are consistently appropriate for the context established by the writer. • Details are specific and consistently effective. • The writing captivates and holds the reader's interest.
Approaches the Standard of Excellence 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Events, actions, and/or ideas are consistently appropriate for the context established by the writer. • Details are specific and consistently effective. • The writing engages and generally holds the reader's interest.
Clearly Meets the Acceptable Standard 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The majority of the events, actions, and/or ideas are appropriate for the context established by the writer. • Details are general and may be predictable, but are appropriate. • The writing generally holds the reader's attention.
Does Not Clearly Meet the Acceptable Standard 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some of the events, actions, and/or ideas are appropriate for the context established by the writer. • Details are few and/or may be repetitive. • The writing does not hold the reader's attention.
Clearly Below the Acceptable Standard 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are few events, actions, and/or ideas. • Details are scant. • The writing is confusing and/or frustrating for the reader.
INS INSUFFICIENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The student has written so little that it is not possible to assess the content.

Note: Content and Organization are weighted to be worth twice as much as each of the other categories.

ORGANIZATION

Focus

When marking **ORGANIZATION** appropriate for Grade 3 writing, the marker should consider the

- beginning
- connections and/or relationships between events, actions, details, and/or characters
- ending

Meets the Standard of Excellence 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The beginning captures the reader's attention, clearly establishes events, characters, and/or setting, and provides direction for the writing. • Connections and/or relationships between events, actions, details, and/or characters are consistently maintained. • The ending ties events and/or actions together.
Approaches the Standard of Excellence 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The beginning clearly establishes events, characters, and/or setting and provides direction for the writing. • Connections and/or relationships between events, actions, details, and/or characters are maintained. • The ending provides an appropriate finish for events and/or actions.
Clearly Meets the Acceptable Standard 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The beginning directly presents information about events, characters, and or setting. • Connections and/or relationships between events, actions, details, and/or characters are generally maintained. • The ending is predictable and/or may be contrived but is connected to events and/or actions.
Does Not Clearly Meet the Acceptable Standard 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The beginning may be confusing. • Connections and/or relationships between events, actions, details, and/or characters are unclear, missing, or inconsistent. • The ending is predictable and/or may be contrived.
Clearly Below the Acceptable Standard 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The beginning provides little information. • Connections and/or relationships between events, actions, details, and/or characters are missing. • The ending, if present, is unconnected to the events and/or actions.
INS INSUFFICIENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The writing has been awarded an INS for Content.

Note: Content and Organization are weighted to be worth twice as much as the other categories.

SENTENCE STRUCTURE

Focus

When marking **SENTENCE STRUCTURE** appropriate for Grade 3 writing, the marker should consider the

- writer's control of sentence structure
- presence of different sentence patterns and length

Meets the Standard of Excellence 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sentence structure is consistently controlled. • Sentence type and length are varied and effective.
Approaches the Standard of Excellence 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sentence structure is controlled. • Sentence type and length are usually varied and effective.
Clearly Meets the Acceptable Standard 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sentence structure is generally controlled but may occasionally impede the meaning. • Sentences may vary in type and length.
Does Not Clearly Meet the Acceptable Standard 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sentence structure is sometimes lacking control, and this often impedes meaning. • There is little variation of sentence type and/or length.
Clearly Below the Acceptable Standard 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thought units are difficult to recognize, and this severely impedes the meaning. • There is no variation of sentence type and/or length.
INS INSUFFICIENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The writing has been awarded an INS for Content.

VOCABULARY

Focus

When marking **VOCABULARY** appropriate for Grade 3 writing, the marker should consider the

- quality of words and expressions
- specificity of words and expressions

Meets the Standard of Excellence 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Words and expressions are used to create vivid images. • Words and expressions are consistently precise and effective.
Approaches the Standard of Excellence 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Words and expressions are descriptive. • Words and expressions are generally specific and effective.
Clearly Meets the Acceptable Standard 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Words and expressions are clear. • Words and expressions are usually more general than specific.
Does Not Clearly Meet the Acceptable Standard 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Words and expressions are basic. • Words and expressions may be repetitive.
Clearly Below the Acceptable Standard 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Words and expressions are simple and/or ineffective. • Words indicate a lack of vocabulary for writing.
INS INSUFFICIENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The writing has been awarded an INS for Content.

CONVENTIONS

Focus

When marking **CONVENTIONS** appropriate for Grade 3 writing, the marker should consider

- end punctuation and capitalization
- spelling
- clarity

Proportion of error to length and complexity of response must be considered.

Meets the Standard of Excellence 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • End punctuation and capitalization are correct. • Most words, familiar and unfamiliar, are spelled correctly; spelling errors are understandable “slips.” • Errors that are present do not affect the clarity or effectiveness of communication.
Approaches the Standard of Excellence 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • End punctuation and capitalization are essentially correct. • Familiar words are spelled correctly; spelling errors are “slips”; unfamiliar words may be spelled phonetically. • Errors that are present rarely affect the clarity of communication.
Clearly Meets the Acceptable Standard 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conventional end punctuation and capitalization are usually correct. • Many familiar words are spelled correctly; errors suggest uneven control of spelling rules; unfamiliar words are generally spelled phonetically. • Errors are sometimes intrusive and may affect the clarity of communication.
Does Not Clearly Meet the Acceptable Standard 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • End punctuation and capitalization, when present, are inconsistent. • Many familiar words are misspelled and/or spelled phonetically. • Errors interfere with the clarity of communication.
Clearly Below the Acceptable Standard 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is little, if any, evidence that the writer understands correct use of end punctuation and capitalization. • Words may be difficult to discern and are generally spelled phonetically. • Communication is not clear.
INS INSUFFICIENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The writing has been awarded an INS for Content.

Part B: Reading

Part B: Reading of the Grade 3 Language Arts Achievement Test consists of 40 multiple-choice questions based on reading selections from fiction, non-fiction, poetry, and visual media.

The reading blueprint for the assessment is on page 19.

The practice questions on pages 20 to 25 appeared on the 1996 Achievement Test and may be used with students. Other questions from the 1996 achievement test remain secured. The practice questions, along with questions from previous bulletins, can be used to prepare students for the current achievement test. These questions illustrate the nature and complexity of those that will appear on the 1997 test, although the emphasis may be slightly different. The key and descriptors for the sample questions are on page 26.

Development

Reading selections were chosen according to the following general guidelines:

- Reading selections, whenever possible, should be relatively short but should be

complete works containing a beginning, a middle, and an end

- Reading selections should reflect the interests of the majority of Grade 3 students
- Reading selections should be of appropriate difficulty for Grade 3 students
- Canadian content should be used extensively

The following considerations guided question development:

- Questions related to each reading selection should be arranged from specific to general, wherever practical
- Questions should test the students' ability to understand and analyze the reading selections and to make judgements about their form and content. Only questions dealing with significant aspects of the reading selections should be asked
- The assessment blueprint must support important learnings for Grade 3 students

Blueprint for Part B: Reading

The blueprint for *Part B: Reading* shows the reporting categories and language function under which questions are classified. The number of questions in each category is approximate.

Reporting Category	Question Distribution by Language Function		Number of Questions	Percent of Test
	Informational	Narrative/Poetic		
1. Understanding Main Ideas/Details The student should be able to identify key details and main ideas, differentiate between main and supporting characters, recognize character motivation and explicit relationships between events and characters, and categorize ideas.	5	10	15	37.5
2. Organization of Ideas and Relationships between Form and Content The student should be able to identify genre (stories, poetry, plays, reports, and articles), organize features of story structure, use text and typographical features, recognize author's techniques, and determine an author's purpose.	4	3	7	17.5
3. Associating Meaning The student should be able to associate meanings of words, expressions, and literary devices from prior knowledge and contextual clues.	3	6	9	22.5
4. Synthesizing Ideas The student should be able to draw conclusions by relating what is known to new information, and assess the plausibility of ideas and situations in literature.	4	5	9	22.5
Number of Questions	16	24	40	100
Percent of Test	40.0	60.0	100	100

I. Read the following story and answer questions 1 to 4.

THE BALD KNIGHT

There once was a Knight who, as he grew old, lost all his hair. His head became as bald as a duck's egg. He didn't want everyone to see how bald he was, so he had a wig made—a fine white wig with long curling tresses.

The very first day he put it on, he went hunting with a company of lords and ladies. Away they went over the green fields and through the forest, with the hounds racing on ahead, and a gay blowing of horns. The Knight was proud of his new wig, as he cantered along on his black horse.

"How handsome they must think I am!" he said to himself.

Presently the hounds lost the scent, and most of the company gathered together under a grove of oak trees till they could pick it up once more. The Knight rode up to join them. Then a dreadful thing happened. He passed under a tree, and as he did so, his wig was caught on a branch and pulled off his head in full view of everyone. How they laughed, and how foolish the poor Knight looked, after thinking himself so handsome! There he sat on his black horse, while the fine curly wig hung above his head on the oak branch.

The Knight could not help seeing the fun, so he laughed as merrily as anyone else.

"Why," he said, almost rolling off his horse with amusement, "how could I expect a wig to stay on my head, when my own hair wouldn't!"

J. Reeves

1. The Knight hunted with

- ☐ people of the village
- ☐ his own family
- ☐ lords and ladies
- ☐ a king and a queen

2. The BEST meaning for the underlined word cantered is

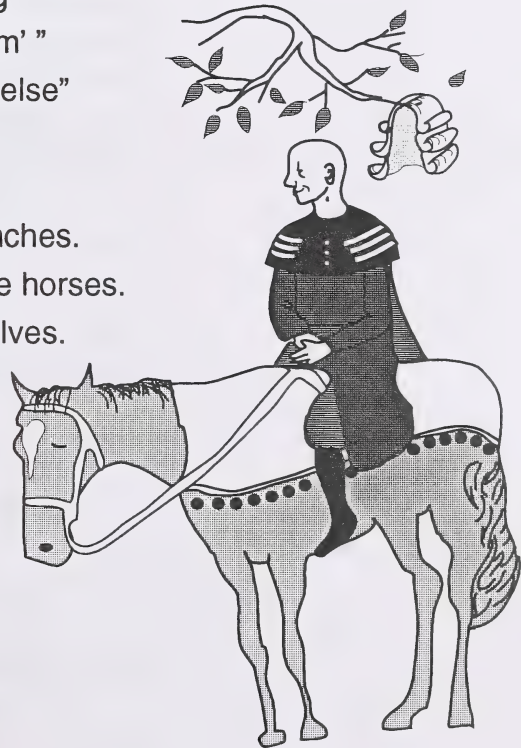
- ☐ rode
- ☐ laughed
- ☐ blowing horns
- ☐ racing ahead

3. What words BEST show that the Knight had a sense of humour?

- ☐ “His head became as bald as a duck’s egg”
- ☐ “The Knight was proud of his new wig”
- ☐ “ ‘How handsome they must think I am’ ”
- ☐ “so he laughed as merrily as anyone else”

4. What is the message of this story?

- ☐ It is dangerous to ride under low branches.
- ☐ People who wear wigs should not ride horses.
- ☐ We need to be able to laugh at ourselves.
- ☐ Be careful when you are hunting.



II. Read the following poem and answer questions 5 to 9.

BUBBLE GUM

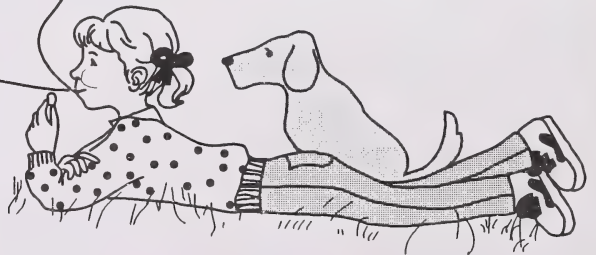
I suck it till it's really soft,
Then chew it kind of slow,
And then I stretch it with my tongue
And blow and blow and blow.

The bubble grows until it meets
My eyebrow and my chin.
Then suddenly it goes *Kerplop!*
And now the fun begins.

There's gum up my nose
And gum on my clothes
And gum on the back of my neck.
There's gum everywhere—
In my ears and my hair!
I'm a pink, sticky, sweet, total wreck.

It won't come off although I scrub
And scrape until I'm numb.
I sure wish someone would invent
A no-stick bubble gum.

Mary Blakeslee



5. The underlined word Kerplop is printed in a different way to help you
- ☐ read the word
 - ☐ find the line
 - ☐ feel the gum
 - ☐ hear the sound
6. The poet is a “total wreck” because the gum is
- ☐ stuck all over
 - ☐ soft and wet
 - ☐ sticky sweet
 - ☐ stretched and pink
7. The BEST meaning of the underlined word numb is
- ☐ very dry
 - ☐ very sleepy
 - ☐ no feeling
 - ☐ no sound
8. The poet wishes that
- ☐ bubble gum would last longer
 - ☐ there was a no-stick bubble gum
 - ☐ gum was not so soft
 - ☐ there was a gum that would stretch
9. The poet PROBABLY wrote this poem to
- ☐ warn children not to blow big bubbles
 - ☐ make a commercial for bubble gum
 - ☐ make fun of what happens when a bubble breaks
 - ☐ explain how to get gum out of your hair

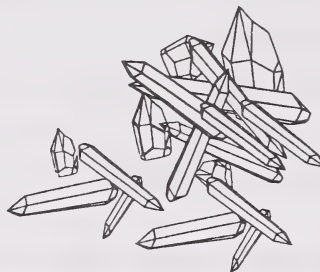
III. Read the following experiment and answer questions 10 to 14.

DR. ZED'S CRYSTAL MOUNTAIN

This experiment shows how crystals can be made.

What You Will Need:

several pieces of charcoal (broken lumps are best)
glass bowl
measuring cup
spoon
food colouring
salt
250 mL hot tap water
60 mL vinegar



How to Make Your Crystal Mountain

1. Place the charcoal lumps in a bowl.
2. Slowly add salt to 250 mL of hot tap water until no more salt will dissolve. Remember to stir.
3. Add the vinegar to the salt solution.
4. Pour the salt solution over the charcoal. If the charcoal floats, drain off some solution.
5. Pour the food colouring on top of the charcoal.
6. Put the bowl in a warm corner. After a few weeks, you'll have a multicolour crystal mountain.

Gordon Penrose

10. Before you start the experiment, the charcoal should be

- ☐ dissolved
- ☐ heated
- ☐ shaken
- ☐ broken

11. Hot water is used in this experiment because

- ☐ salt mixes better in hot water
- ☐ vinegar mixes well in hot water
- ☐ hot water dissolves the charcoal lumps
- ☐ hot water cleans the mixing bowl

12. If the charcoal floats in the salt solution,

- ☐ break the charcoal lumps
- ☐ add vinegar to the solution
- ☐ drain off some solution
- ☐ pour food colouring on top of the charcoal

13. Food colouring is used in this experiment so that the crystals

- ☐ dissolve easily
- ☐ are different colours
- ☐ float higher
- ☐ are larger

14. People would MOST LIKELY make their own crystal mountains because

- ☐ it is fun to watch them in the dark
- ☐ crystals are pretty and interesting
- ☐ it is good to eat them
- ☐ crystals are quick and easy to grow

Key and Descriptors for Practice Reading Questions

Question	Key	Language Function	Reporting Category	Curriculum Standard
1	C	Narrative/ poetic	Main ideas/details	Locate key details
2	A	Narrative/ poetic	Associating meaning	Use semantic or meaning cues as a strategy for determining word meaning
3	D	Narrative/ poetic	Main ideas/details	Use story context cues to describe character motivation
4	C	Narrative/ poetic	Synthesizing ideas	Use prior experience to assist in forming ideas in response to what has been read
5	D	Narrative/ poetic	Organization of ideas	Use typographical features to enhance understanding
6	A	Narrative/ poetic	Associating meaning	Associate meaning of phrases beyond literal meaning
7	C	Narrative/ poetic	Associating meaning	Associate meaning of words using contextual clues
8	B	Narrative/ poetic	Main ideas/details	Determine poet's attitude toward subject
9	A	Narrative/ poetic	Organization of ideas	Determine poet's purpose
10	D	Informational	Main ideas/details	Determine relationships among details in a passage
11	A	Informational	Synthesizing Ideas	Draw conclusions by relating what is known to new information
12	C	Informational	Main ideas/details	Identify key details
13	B	Informational	Synthesizing ideas	Relate what is known to new information
14	B	Informational	Synthesizing ideas	Make a generalization using given information

Performance Assessment Component

A provincial sample of Grade 3 students from across the province will be selected to participate in the performance assessment in Language Arts. The assessment provides students with an opportunity to demonstrate learnings that cannot be easily measured using multiple-choice questions. The books and the activities involved in the assessment have been chosen and developed by teachers, and are designed to model good classroom instruction and assessment methods.

Students will be asked to choose a book and then to find information in that book in order to complete specified activities. They will also be asked to reflect on their work in written form. From this assessment, valuable information will be obtained about how students obtain information when reading and how they apply their understanding of that information to given tasks.

Preparing Students for the Assessment

The best way to prepare students for writing the Language Arts test is to use instructional time teaching the important learnings in Grade 3 Language Arts.

Teachers may also wish, however, to familiarize their students with the format of both the multiple-choice and the written-response components of the assessment by having them work through the practice questions and writing assignment included in this bulletin.

The Student Evaluation Branch has published documents entitled *Samples of Students' Writing*, which came from the responses given on previous Grade 3 Language Arts achievement tests. Teachers may wish to share these samples with students and to familiarize students with the scoring criteria that appear in this bulletin.

We hope that teachers will share the following information with students to help them prepare for the Language Arts Assessment.

Part A: Writing

Have students:

Listen carefully to the instructions as they are read out loud and do what the assignment asks them to do. It is important for them to read over the instructions and think about what they will write.

Talk about their ideas. Students will have a chance to share their ideas with some of their classmates. They should remember, though, that each student is to write his/her own story. Sharing ideas is just to help them get started.

Plan their writing. Students should make a plan that helps them organize their ideas. They may want to try a

- list (characters, setting, etc.)
- chart (beginning, middle, ending)
- web

Think about some of the things that make good writing, such as

- using important ideas that make sense together
- including details or describing events, characters, and their actions
- organizing ideas in an order that makes sense
- using words and sentences that help the reader understand what they want to say

Check their work and make any changes on their first draft.

Part B: Reading

Have students:

Read the material, using the strategy that works best for them. They may

- read the selection and think carefully about it before they try to answer the questions OR
- read the questions first and then read the selection, remembering the questions they need to answer

Read a selection more than once. It is all right for students to read a selection as many times as they need to in order to answer the questions. Remind them to go back to the reading selection before answering each question.

Make sure they look at all types of information given. Information may be given in words, pictures, cartoons, or charts.

Make sure they read carefully all four choices before choosing the answer they think is best. All of the answers might seem partly correct, but only one is the **best** answer. If they don't see a correct or best answer right away, encourage them to try to find two choices that make the most sense and choose one of them.

Credits

J. Reeves. "The Bald Knight" from *Fables from Aesop*. Glasgow & London: Blackie & Son Ltd., 1960. Reprinted by permission of Blackie & Son Ltd.

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